

Earth First!

Action Update

30p

No. 43 November 1997

"We are the ones who could never be conquered, it's deeper in us than we know." Casey Neill



OIL CONFERENCE DISRUPTED

Minister of State for Energy, John Battle MP, was interrupted by climate activists during a key speech on the future of the oil and gas industry. One activist, dressed as an 'oil bride', threw herself at him to symbolise the intimate relationship between this government and the oil industry. Others unfurled a banner reading "DTI for OIL - Wedded to climate change". The non-violent direct action was taken as part of the '100 days' of action leading up to the Kyoto Climate Change conference in order to highlight the unhealthy collusion between government and oil interests. It comes on the day that the oil industry and the government are standing side by side in the High Court against Greenpeace and a week after a leaked letter showed how John Battle and BP conspired to keep anti-oil activities out of the public eye. Contact 0171 281 4621

VIDEO POWER!

Remember 'Earth First arrival at Kings Cross?' in a recent edition of the Action Update? The story referred to proposals to develop Copenhagen Park, one of the precious few remaining green spaces in London.

Campaigners put together a video letter to show to the Islington and Hackney council Planning and Development meeting which was supposed to discuss the proposals. The video letter was delivered by local residents and the

council watched in disbelief. So moved by the residents' testimonies were they that the majority of councillors abstained in the vote whilst the remaining two voted against the planning proposal. Copenhagen Park lives to bud again another spring!!!

QUARRY HALTED

The Anti Quarry Action group, AQUA, at Teigngrace, near Newton Abbot has won a temporary halt to construction by forcing the government to call a public enquiry into the proposed quarry extension.

Unprecedented local activity, camps on site, direct action, and general hard graft led to thousands of letters being sent to John Prescott demanding a re-think.

Just before the announcement of the temporary reprieve, a 242 mile protest march to London ended with the walkers sitting on the Deputy Prime Minister's roof. After their long hike they had hoped to present a letter to the Environment Minister but were greeted instead by a private secretary. Undeterred, the walkers returned to the Ministry and sat on the glass entrance canopy of the building to display a 22 foot by 16 foot letter.

Although there is some concern that an undefended site may be trashed while pending the outcome of the public enquiry, tarring-down is in full swing. Contact the campaign on 0370 878920 to say nice one, well done.

IRELAND GENETICS CROP DESTROYED

The only genetically engineered crop in the Republic of Ireland has been destroyed: in an anonymous phone call to the Genetic Engineering Network, a group calling themselves the Gaelic Earth Liberation Front told of their destruction of the one acre site in the early hours of the morning on September 28th. They went on to say: "This was the first genetically engineered crop in Ireland and hopefully it will be the last". The experimental crop of roundup ready sugar beet, owned by the US based biotech corporation Monsanto, had been planted earlier in the year at a government run farm near Carlow in the Republic of Ireland.

On May 1st 1997 the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) granted Monsanto the first licence in Ireland for a deliberate release of genetically modified organisms - in this case Round-Up Ready sugar beet. Monsanto had applied for the licence to test-plant in three locations, but had later narrowed their application to the one site at the research centre managed by Teagasc, the state sponsored agricultural advisory body.

A member of Genetic Concern!, an Irish group campaigning against genetic engineering, immediately sought a High Court Judicial Review of the EPA's decision to grant a licence. An interim injunction prevented Monsanto planting the Glyphosate-resistant sugar beet in Ireland but it was lifted on 27th May and the beet was planted that same afternoon. However, while refusing to grant a permanent injunction, the High Court Judge gave permission for a judicial review of the Environmental Protection Agency licence granted to Monsanto.

The judicial review is not scheduled to take place until 10th December 1997 by which time the first year's GE sugar beet crop would have been harvested. If the Court finds that the licences were improperly granted, Monsanto would have to abandon the 4 year test and Monsanto had said that if it is revoked, they would destroy all their GE sugar beet, with a herbicide! It now looks as though whatever happens in the judicial review, someone has saved Monsanto the effort. Contact 0181 374 9516.

MCACCTIONS

Following McDonald's complete failure to stem the widespread and growing public distribution of *What's Wrong With McDonald's?* leaflets, there were once again hundreds of protests and pickets taking place across the world during the Global Week of Action Against McDonald's from 11th to 18th October. These included a 50-strong picket of a McDonald's in Manchester on the International Day of Solidarity With McDonald's Workers. The parents of Mark

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Requiem for the Car and Roads & Cars are two websites being launched this month, exploring the culture and crisis of the car. The first bears a critical farewell to its glamorous image, the second presents an archive of photos of anti-road activities. For info and site details contact 0181 980 6256

The Sustainable European Tour, SET '98, is looking for people. A new motivated and inspired team is trying to get things going and already have a couple of exciting ideas for next year. How about this one: Hiring an unemployed Irish fisherman with boat, starting off in Ireland and travelling all the way down to Spain, Greece; or just travelling with our bus and trailer but this time to the south of Europe (east and west). So if you know any exciting and creative people (you) or groups (especially from the south) please get in touch. Contact ASEED.

A CRITICAL MASS celebrated the life of Danny Plank, aged 29, who was killed by a Parcel Force van riding his bike home from work. There was over a hundred cyclists who delayed the traffic for the entire journey that Danny made regularly from Shoreham to Worthing

Turning the Tide is a programme which attempts to bring together personal empowerment, community building and effective campaigning strategies. They are running a workshop on active nonviolence on Saturday November 29th in Birkenhead. Contact 13 Riverside Walk, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 0TT.

A new networking forum / newsletter is being put together by and for radical women working on a wide range of campaigns across Britain. Could you contribute news? Write about your experience? Take photos? Contact 0171 978 8214

Robin Cook blocked 3 export licences for sniper rifles and armoured Land Rovers, worth around £1 million, to the Indonesian regime, still in brutal and illegal occupation of East Timor and West Papua. Not Bad. Then, the Labour Party Conference safely out of the way, more licences were granted for a wide array of weapons and nuclear components. Not much consistency in Cook's ethical foreign policy. However, the principle has now been established that it's ok to block arms sales to repressive regimes that violate human rights and exploit the environment for the benefit of multinationals.

Road Alert has done an updated reprint of 'Road Raging - Top Tips for Wrecking Road Building' order your copies of this excellent book now from Road Alert.

McDonalds Action Group, Kent have convinced their planning committee to refuse permission for a 'McDrive-Thru', an appeal is expected. 0956 355 864 or 0181 462 0820

So far over 70 reps of radical publications have signed a statement of solidarity with the defendants of the GANDALF trial, in defence of free speech. For more details or to add names to the list, contact Corporate Watch.

Hopkins, a worker who was fatally electrocuted on that day in 1992, laid a wreath at the store for Mark and another for Michael Johnston who was fatally electrocuted at an Australian store in 1996. The McLibel Defendants launched the Week Of Action at McDonald's corporate HQ in Illinois (USA) and the next day joined a picket in solidarity with all McDonald's workers at a store in downtown Chicago where 20 years ago the majority of workers signed up to a union. On 16th October, 40 protesters held a colourful picket outside McDonald's European Headquarters in London to mark the 13th annual World Anti-McDonald's Day (also UN World Food Day). Bags full of McDonald's litter were returned to the company to highlight the problems of waste, pollution and litter caused by the company's excessive packaging. Protests have been reported from Brazil to Japan, from New Zealand to Sweden to Canada. Contact 0171 713 1269

GENETIX ACTIONS

In the UK many people took part in the global days of action against genetic engineering. Here is a little taster of some of the inspiring and successful activities which took place. Local mutant vegetables dressed to impress Labour Party delegates at their annual conference in Brighton. Campaigners in Norfolk marked out and taped off areas they believed to be biohazards at the John Innes centre, which is involved in development of GE plants and bacteria.

Five activists spent 3 hours NAKED on the roof tops of Monsanto's advertising agency Bartle Bogle & Hegarty (BBH). They were exposing the cover up of genetically manipulated food. They agreed to come down if the company signed a written statement declaring all GM food safe for public consumption and safe for the environment. Of course BBH refused to sign such a ridiculous statement. Total exposure, nice one!

All over the country around 50 groups took part in supermarket actions, this was accompanied by street theatre and information stalls. Ending the two weeks involved 30 hours of music, art, web sites and dance to complement information about the campaigns against genetic engineering at the Global Internet Cafe in Soho, London. Overall the days of action raised a lot of awareness and support but the industry continues to grow and mutate so keep up the pressure and let's stop it before it's

GANDALF TRIAL

The trial of editors from Green Anarchist magazine and Animal Liberation Front activists at Portsmouth Crown Court is due to come to an end soon with summing up imminent and the verdict expected around November 10th. The Judge has already declared that he considers the defendants guilty, whilst a juror who declared that he knew someone who wrote a report being used as evidence has not been dismissed. Supporters of the defendants are planning to burn an effigy of the Judge outside the court house to commemorate Guy Fawkes Night - an act as contemptible of the court as the Green Anarchist's three page update of the trial in their paper. The published update was ignored by the Judge in the trial, which has already cost £3million. Green Anarchist has declared that whatever the trial outcome the paper will still be published.

FASLANE ACTIONS

On the weekend 18/19th October, 50 people, working in 5 or 6 different groups, descended

upon the nuclear base. Around midnight on Saturday night a series of co-ordinated actions occurred. One group of activists, with the help of some bolt cutters, went to the Media Reception Centre which is where visitors are taken to avoid witnessing the real activities of the base. They decorated the place by painting yellow peace symbols and slogans. More painting and damage was done at Glen Douglas, the biggest store of nuclear weapons in Europe. Meanwhile another group went to the main gates playing music, banging fences, sounding the alarms and generally having a party.

WINTER EVICTIONS?

Residents of Faslane Peace Camp have been served a summons to appear in Dumbarton Sheriff Court on November 5th. (A huge party is being planned, bonfire on the beach, all welcome.) The summons is on behalf of Argyll and Bute Council and is part of its efforts to evict the camp. If the council is successful in its court action Argyll and Bute will then go ahead with its eviction. This would mean Strathclyde Police being used to forcibly remove men, women and children from their homes in midwinter - an act of violence comparable with any during the Highland clearances. It is a tragedy that this act of aggression should be happening in the run up to the creation of Scotland's first parliament in 290 years.

Faslane Peace Camp is outraged that Argyll and Bute Council should be going to court before talking to the camp. The decision to evict the camp was made at a closed council meeting. Neither Faslane Peace Camp nor the residents of Argyll and Bute have been consulted about the eviction, nor have they been told what the motive for the eviction is, nor indeed where the money for the eviction is to come from - what council services will suffer budget cuts because of the eviction costs.

Faslane Peace Camp residents and supporters intend to pursue a full and vigorous campaign to prevent the eviction, employing a variety of tactics. They also hope to emphasise the functions that the Peace Camp residents perform such as monitoring the movement of nuclear warheads and submarines; helping stop every convoy of nuclear weapons that has come into Scotland (Scotland's Chernobyls in waiting); and maintaining a memorial garden to all those who have suffered as a result of the nuclear industry and of nuclear weaponry.

The very existence of the Peace Camp is a challenge to those politicians who believe the public has no right to be informed about, no right to question, and no right to debate the implications of government policies. Contact 01436 820901

ENFIELD LOCK

A group in Enfield Lock, North London has been fighting the development of the former Royal Small Arms factory in their area. They were given a discretionary Public Inquiry against the building of a causeway bridge by the Department of Transport. In an attempt to outmanoeuvre this, the local council and the developers did some pretty legal footwork and have decided that the bridge is to be a private bridge built on private land (Section 90 or 93) and they therefore do not need a bridging order from DoT.

The Public Inquiry was lost about 2 weeks ago and the group has complained to the DoT but as the council have withdrawn the application nothing can be done - same bridge, same design, same location - on land sold by the Lee Valley

How to Contact the Earth First! Action Update

Post: Earth First! Action Update, Dept 29, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. Telephone: 0161 224 4846. E-mail: actionupdate@gn.apc.org. Enclose a SAE for replies. Send us your details if you want to subscribe to the free e-mail server. Earth First! Website address: <http://www.hrc.wmln.ac.uk/campaigns/ef/earthfirst.html>

Regional Parks, through a road with Grade II listed building and through a Conservation Area. Contractors have started fencing off the land where the bridge is to be built.

The only thing that is holding up the bulldozers is the need for a decontamination strategy - the whole area is contaminated with the leftover chemicals of the Royal Small Arms factory. 1300 plus homes are to be built on the factory site, land that is heavily contaminated with lead, arsenic, mercury, asbestos and possible other experimental weapons. Help is needed. Contact Elaga@AOL.co.uk.

DTI EVACUATED

As part of the Liverpool Dockers Mystery Tour, approximately 80 activists met at Victoria Station in London. Destination: unknown. There was a plan to meet up with the Liverpool dockers at Shoreham docks but for one reason or another we didn't make it there and that was fine because they didn't need any help in shutting down the docks for the day. Meanwhile armed with chaos and not much else, we descended on the Department of Trade and Industry. 40 people found themselves climbing the stairs of the offices while the confused employees evacuated the building. Others protested on surrounding streets. 12 people occupied the roof of the DTI building for most of the day while others were removed early on. 37 people got arrested, mostly for suspicion of burglary! The police totally over reacted and enclosed the entire area with maybe 40 or more riot vans. Their ridiculous approach to the situation generated quite a lot of public support for us. At the end of the day we showed our strength and our solidarity with the dockers and their struggle.

COPEX EXHIBITION

After their disastrous libel action against Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) last year, things could not get any worse for Copex, organisers of the arms fairs specialising in torture instruments, covert and specialist security equipment.

October 1st saw several hundred people blockade Farnborough M.O.D. base all day, listening to victims of British torture equipment tell their stories. One Buddhist monk from Tibet even managed to smuggle electroshock batons from a Chinese jail to bring the results back home.

After arresting 90 people at the Renee Beene arms fair a month before the police felt less inclined to arrest this time and some demonstrators moved on to blockade other gates and 'ambush' delegates from the usual array of brutal regimes - countries such as Indonesia, Colombia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, all previous attendees at the Contingent and Operational Procurement Exhibition.

At the end of the day police were hinting that they would not get involved in another Copex in Farnborough, which effectively means they are looking for another new home; their previous 'Torturers' Tesco', Sandown Park Racecourse, gave them the boot the year before. If Copex continue to suffer from this type of demonstration, they might decide to quit altogether! Contact CAAT 0171 281 0297.

KEBELE PROJECT THREATENED

A large scale eviction seems likely if Lloyds Bank attempts to repossess the building now occupied by the Kebele Community Project in Bristol. If so, it will be a loss to the community and may cost Lloyds Bank more than the building is worth.

Kebele is a non-profitable collective and has operated from a squatted building for nearly two years. In September of this year ownership of the building passed from the Bristol One Parent Project to Lloyds Bank. Lloyds Bank now wish to evict, despite attempts to negotiate a future for the building as a housing co-op. Instead Lloyds Bank intend to auction the property which is worth very little and will almost certainly stand empty until it is knocked down and replaced with something cheap, ugly and profitable. Several other houses on the same road are already empty and bricked up after squatters were evicted earlier this year.

Kebele has been opening twice a week as a vegan cafe, taking only donations for meals and providing a safe and comfortable space for people to meet. The space is used for video evenings, talks, kids workshops, bike workshops, poetry nights, acoustic music and much more. It is an information centre with a book, magazine and video library. It is also used as a space for environmental campaigning groups to meet and organise. Many activists have used Kebele as a place to sleep and stay en route to campaigns and evictions in the South West. It is a cultural centre alive and thriving, with strong support from its local community.

Kebele firmly believes that it is time to put people before profit, to continue, demonstrating that an anarchic and co-operative existence can be achieved. Contact 14 Robertson Road, Eastville, Bristol or 0117 9399469

BINGLEY STILL IN OCCUPATION

The Bingley 'relief road' scheme was put on hold last July following a review of road schemes but may still be given the go ahead when the government makes its final decision next spring. The protest camp which was set up on route when the scheme was first aired is still in existence. Campaigners are hoping that its presence will help to deter the government from proceeding with the road. In the meantime the Department of Transport has already started clearing buildings on the route of the road in order to pre-empt next spring's decision. BARC, the Bingley Anti-Road Campaign, is asking for support. Contact 01274 504626

BARRY HORNE CALLS OFF HUNGER STRIKE

Barry Horne started taking food again at the end of September after spending six weeks on hunger strike. This followed a fax which was sent to the campaign agreeing to talks between the government and three of Barry's representatives.

The negotiations on the talks were stalled at first because the Home Office objected to criminal records of some of those nominated by Barry. However Barry's negotiators argued that their 'crimes' were related to animal rights activities and therefore were political in nature and not criminal - this was eventually accepted. The meeting took place but little progress was seen with government officials saying that ideally they would like to see an end to animal testing but in practice doing nothing. The Barry Horne Support Campaign see the meeting as a positive conclusion to the campaign as the anti-vivisection movement has been revitalised whilst the government has stated unequivocally its position on animal testing.

EVENTS

31 Halloween activities to close down open cast sites around the country. Contact: No Opencast, 0171 603 1831

31-7 "Halloween Smash" International Earth Nights Earth Liberation Front call to use darkness 'constructively'

November

1 "The Streets are Alive with the Sound of Music, lalelalel" Oxford Reclaim the Streets, meeting at lower south park, east Oxford, 12 noon

1 Movement for Justice demo against police harassment. Meet 1pm at Brixton Oval opposite Lambeth Town hall

1 Start of the fox hunting season. Hunt Sals Association 01723 622827

1-8 Activist gathering in Berlin, Germany. Contact: ACSE York St. 39 HH 10965, Berlin. Tel: 00-49 (30) 18 91 31 44. Meet on the 1st at 12:30pm at Samariter St. 32

3 Start of COP3 International Climate Change Conference Kyoto Japan - contact Greenpeace. FoE.

3 Barry Horne at Bristol Crown Court. Call the support group. 0171 278 3068

5 "Burn The Horricks" demo at the site of the proposed Wakefield Toxic Dump expansion. For info call Paul 01924 893564

8 "Fulgent goes to court for eviction, see article. Party on the beach. Contact 01436 820 901

7 Action at Nuburn Woods, York. Contact 01904 410185

7-9 Women Crossing Paths making links between different campaigns. Aldermaston. Contact Bristol 0117 9393746, Cardiff 01222 396563 or Oxford 01865 771046

12 Die-in at the Foreign Office, London to mark the 6th anniversary of the Dili Massacre in East Timor. Meet Bam outside St James' Park tube. Contact 0171 607 2302

12 To find out about other actions around the country call 0161 834 0295

14-16 2nd anniversary of death of Ken Saro Wiwa, contact Delta on 0116 255 3230

14-16 Ashton Court Yards weekend of action. Contact Avon Earth First 0117 9393093

16 Family funday at Dunford Quarry, peaceful mass trespasses, meet at quarry entrance 11:30am

17 Close down Dunford Quarry, non-violent direct action to stop work. Contact Bristol EF 0117 9420129

17-23 Transport action seminar in Budapest. Contact: ASSEED or +31 20 668 2236

21-23 Action against industrial agriculture gathering, contact 01508 531636

24 Action against industrial agriculture contact Norfolk EF

29 International No Shop Day organised by 'Enough', contact 0161 226 6668 or 0181 981 0480

December

7-14 A SEED Europe ELECTROLUX Activist Gathering. Workshops on strategies for activists against modern biotechnologies, transport and forest destruction, globalising forces such as the EU and the World Trade Organisation. Contact A SEED Europe, PO Box 92666, 1909 AB Amsterdam, Netherlands. +31 20-6682236

Go to Dead Womans Bottom, a camp in Somerset to defend a 6000 year old wood and many rare species from a quarry access road. Or sign up to their 'Beat the Bulldozer' pledge for if and when the action starts. Contact 01749 880 144 or just pay them a visit.

CONSUME CONSUME CONSUME 'Dancing on the Ruins of Multinational Corporations', 'Riff Raff', and other of your favourite Casey Neill tunes are available from the EF! AU on tapes (£5) and CD (£8) + £1 postage. Make cheques payable to Earth First!. All profits from the sale will go to the Action Update. 0161 224 4846

LEGAL DISCLAIMER: The editors of the Earth First! Action Update do not intend to encourage people to carry out any illegal action. The Action Update is for information purposes only.

HUNTINGDON CAMPS EVICTON ALERT!

The first camp to be set up outside Huntingdon Research Centre is going strong, despite being evicted from its earlier position, and can be contacted on 0589 026435.

There is also a camp on a beautiful piece of land outside Huntingdon Life Science (HLS) in Wilmslow. They are expecting evictions soon as the notice was received at the end of October and not so happy campers are due to appear in the high court in London on Monday 3rd November. Eviction is imminent. In the meantime the Wilmslow campers are holding constant pickets of HLS throughout the week. Contact 0958 451525.

ASHTON COURT QUARRY

Ashton Court, a park of rich meadows bordered on three sides by ancient woodland, was designated to the people of Bristol 100 years ago. It is currently under threat from plans by multinational Pioneer Aggregates who are suggesting moving a wildflower meadow as part of their plans to quarry a further 20 acres of Ashton Court Estate.

None too happy about this idea, campaigners blockaded the entrance to the quarry recently and locked themselves on to a Land Rover conveniently parked in the entrance. Spirits were kept high by tea, toast and music while roads leading into the quarry were lined with waiting lorries and police riot vans. Six arrests for aggravated trespass were made.

After the action, Pioneer attempted a bungling public relations exercise by claiming that an amount of oil (varying between 1000 litres and 1000 gallons according to which paper you read) had been spilt by campaigners. Ashton Court activists have described this ruse to be so transparent that it is practically invisible, claiming that such a large amount of oil would be clearly visible yet there have been no witnesses to this oil and no criminal investigation is underway. They refer us to a similar case a couple of years ago after an action at Whitley Quarry when it was claimed that oil had been spilt yet it was later proven to have been leaking on the site for quite some time before the protest took place.

Contact 0117 9393093 for details of the next weekend of action on 14 - 16 November.

DOOM DOME

Six activists recently entered the construction site of the millennium dome in Greenwich, south-east London. They climbed the giant 350ft crane hired to lift the masts that support the structure of the dome, bringing work on site to a virtual standstill. The occupation was the work of a

coalition of empowered local people and activists from various groups uniting under the banner of "Time Bomb!". The campaign is calling for the abandonment of the "Doomsday Dome".

The occupation marks the beginning of a sustained campaign of non-violent direct action on the site of the proposed millennium dome. The building work is already behind schedule, and with the construction deadline already being extremely tight, this could spell the end for one of the most unpopular white elephants ever conceived in Britain. Contact 0171 561 9146

NABURN WOODS CHOPPED

The chainsaws finally came for Naburn Woods in York on 19th October. Thanks to a tip off York LEAF knew about it, and a small group of activists set out to try and stop it. After failing to get up trees during the night, they invaded the site in the morning. Dead trees were everywhere - most of them had come down between 8am, when work started, and 9 am, when the protesters turned up. Immediately they ran towards the sound of a chainsaw cutting through a lime tree. However, the tree was just about to fall and it landed inches away from fleeing protesters. Nevertheless they spent the rest of the day invading the site and causing disruption. By evening all there was left to do was to survey the destruction - over 200 big trees down and a site so trashed that it was impossible to make out where the camp had been a year ago. With nothing left to battle over, security and protestors went off to pick mushrooms together at the old cricket field at the back of the site, and reminisce over past encounters. In some ways the last hope of saving the site has now been crushed, but the campaign continues with an action on November 7th. Contact 01904 410185

RECRUITING FOR RADSTOCK RAILWAY...

The first public consultation concerning proposals for the disused railway site, Radstock Railway, was held at the end of September and proved an overwhelming success with more people present than could fit the hall. A final vote on the current proposals was almost 100% against yet the next morning surveyors appeared at the site surveying for the new roundabout and road! The proposals are to build a supermarket, industrial units, housing, road and railway on former railway land.

Already attempts have been made to illegally remove the section 6 and camp cordon by transport police and heavies. An eviction notice was served on the camp two months ago but then it was declared to not be an urgent matter.

Ownership of the land for the proposed development is questionable - it is believed that

the land may be ex-British coal board land which would make it now common land. However three separate groups are also claiming ownership of the site but are yet to come up with evidence to prove this.

People living on site have drawn up another plan to prove that positive alternatives do exist. They need you. Contact 01761 433373.

NO SHOP DAY 97

"Consume less for a just, sane and sustainable future." This years' collection of bizarre, inspired and thoroughly camp actions and events will take place on November 29th in the heart of the consumer society; its shopping centres, high streets and super markets. After last years' visitation by confused Aliens, who came to find out about the absurd rituals and excesses of our consumer culture, anything might happen....

Anyone wanting to get involved, and receive ideas for actions, posters and details of what went on last year in places as far apart as Brisbane and Seattle should contact: 0161 226 6668 or Enough Anti Consumerism Campaign, One World Centre, 6 Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS or e-mail: @ethiconatmcr1.poptel.org.uk

NATIONAL EF! ACTION

At the Northern EF! gathering recently, a discussion was initiated concerning the possibility of a nationally organised EF! action. It was felt that morale and confidence around organising big actions was getting low: nobody dare get an action together, in case a) it gets stopped by our friends in blue, and so b) fails, and c) they then get slagged off by everyone else for doing things wrong. Obviously this situation is not good, but it was felt that doing national actions every so often is a worthwhile and an important thing to do.

Large actions can be empowering (while local stuff is key, it's good to feel you're part of something bigger every once in a while); they're good for involving people who maybe don't have a local activist group to work with; some actions can only be done with large numbers; and we shouldn't be cowed by the possibility of being over zealously policed.

The general feeling was that we should think about doing a big action early next year. And that it should be organised by a "national" group of people from all over the country to ensure it gets widespread support.

Some people felt that at the summer EF! gathering there was a tide of opinion against doing national actions per se. A successful action needs everyone's will behind it. PLEASE respond with any opinions on this issue to *National Action?* c/o the EF!AU.

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YA BASTA!

"We want peace with justice, respect and dignity. We will no longer live on our knees" Subcomandante Marcos

With the cry of Ya Basta (enough is enough) the Zapatistas burst onto the world stage on January 1st 1994. Armed and dressed in black balaclavas the indigenous Mayan community of Southern Mexico took possession of the five major towns in the state of Chiapas. They declared war on the federal army and government, demanded the repeal of NAFTA, an end to neo-liberalism, the rights of the indigenous peoples of Mexico to be recognised, land, liberty, freedom and the right to live with dignity.

Their words and actions inspired millions across the world as they mounted the first indigenous peoples challenge to global capitalism. It was no coincidence that the date chosen for the initial Zapatista uprising, January 1, 1994 coincided with the NAFTA, (North American Free Trade Agreement) coming into force.

The state of Chiapas is endowed with a vast store of natural resources including North America's last remaining tropical rainforest The Selva Lacandon. Oil and Uranium have already been discovered here by an unnamed US company. Multinationals around the world have had their eyes on Chiapas for some time, most have been waiting for NAFTA to come into effect to start the process of exploitation.

As you travel through the Lacandon jungle today its clear that the uprising has disrupted mining, road building and logging. It comes as no surprise that the Zapatista army (EZLN) choose to base themselves here deep in the Selva Lacandon.

The campesinos of Chiapas are well aware of what Neo-liberalism means for their communities, their lives and the future of their children. They have seen with their own eyes the destruction of their environment, the hunger and pain that is left behind when companies choose to satisfy their desire for profit.

"There are those with white skins and a dark sorrow. Our struggle walks with these skins. There are those who have dark skins and a white arrogance, against them is our fire. Our armed path is not against skin colour, but against the colour of money." EZLN

The Zapatistas mounted an unparalleled challenge to the First World, neo-liberal policies and capitalism. Three years on and the spirit of the Zapatista rebellion is spreading. Support for their actions has come not only from the peoples of Mexico but also from other indigenous communities across the globe.

The Zapatistas believe that their uprising is not isolated but part of a global awakening. The Second Intergalactic Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neo-Liberalism recently hosted by Spain proved them right. Thousands of grassroots activists from more than 60 countries gathered in Spain to develop a global network of resistance.

Amongst the indigenous peoples, trade unionists, anarchists, environmentalists, academics and squatters who attended this global meeting were representatives from the Ogoni in Nigeria, farmers' unions in India, combatants from the Zapatista army (the EZLN), land rights delegates from the Philippines, Bolivia, El Salvador, Indonesia, Peru, Assam, Nicaragua, Sem Tierra from Brazil, activists from the US, Germany, Finland, France, Italy, Poland and EF! people from the UK.

We heard from direct action movements across five continents. At the land rights forum we heard from Swamy, the President of the Karnataka state Farmers' Union. He told of the decision of thousands of Indian farmers to take nonviolent direct action against multinationals. When the transnational Cargill attempted to monopolise the indigenous seed market local farmers burnt down the regional office. Swamy stated; "We need to commit ourselves to building not an international network of words and information but a global network of

direct action and solidarity."

From Brazil the Sem Terra Movement told of thousands of squatted collective farms worked and ran by landless families. From Mexico we heard of the fire in people's hearts that had been lit by the Zapatistas, as indigenous people across the country fought the commodification of their lands by the

Mexican government and transnational corporations. And from Europe activists told of the direct action campaigns against the nuclear industry, road building and multinationals.

At the closing meeting of the Encuentro, Felipe, one of the two masked combatants from the EZLN, stated; "... today we tell you brothers and sisters, continue resisting as we do, because the future of all of us is to triumph." Those of us who travelled from the UK to this gathering want to build not only on the links we made but on the dreams we shared. As capitalism goes global so too will the resistance to it.

Today Chiapas is scattered with army troops conducting what amounts

to a psychological war against the peoples who live there. Every village is surrounded by army camps. There is a ceasefire in Chiapas but there is no peace in Southeast Mexico. Daily flights of armed helicopters fly low over the jungle. Human rights abuses are commonplace. There are daily reports of arbitrary detentions, torture, executions, rape and violation and plunder to communal and personal property. The USA is covertly involved. Under the guise of providing helicopters, training and arms for the fight against drugs it has given the Mexican government weaponry that is being used to destroy its own people. The elite National Guard of the US army is lined up along the Guatemalan border with Mexico awaiting instructions for the next Mexican government offensive on the indigenous communities of Chiapas. The land occupations continue as campesinos reclaim land that once belonged to them but with the evictions comes death and destruction.

On Sunday 14th September 1997, a masked representative from each of the 1,111 indigenous villages marched on the capital Mexico D.F. to launch the civil organisation the Zapatista National Liberation Front and to demand rights for the indigenous people. The Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo who choose to attend a military commemoration ceremony instead, reported that the government would not honour their agreements made at the peace negotiations about sovereignty and national unity. His response was a coded rejection of the indigenous peoples' demands for autonomy.

The people of Chiapas desperately need our support and solidarity. There are three groups in Britain which are part of a network of international solidarity groups. These can be contacted for more information;

- 1) Chiapas Support Group, Box 19, 82 Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5BB.
- 2) fhuman, c/o BM-CRL, London. WC1N 3XX email: fhuman@hotmail.com
- 3) Chiapas Action, Kings College, Cambridge OB2 1ST

There are monthly demos outside the Mexican Tourist Office on the first Friday of the month (Contact fhuman). The Zapatista video "Visions of Freedom" is available from the Bristol Group for £7.50 plus 50p p&p

The local human rights organisation in Chiapas are desperately short of international observers. If you are thinking of going to Mexico, can speak Spanish and are prepared to spend a week or two with the indigenous communities as a 'campamento for the peace' get in contact with Fray Bartolome Centre for Human Rights in Chiapas. Email cdhbcasas@laneta.apc.org

For more news about the Encuentro and possible solidarity actions contact Ya Basta, c/o Avon Gorge EF!

Info can also be found on the web www.pangea.org/encuentro or <http://vivaldi.nexus.it/commerce/mercato/chiapas>

VIVA ZAPATA!



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WHAT IS EARTH FIRST!?

Earth First! is not a cohesive group or a campaign but a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies or work under. The general principles behind the name are non-hierarchical organisation and the use of direct action to confront, stop, and eventually reverse the forces that cause the destruction of the Earth and its inhabitants. The above contacts are autonomous groups that consider themselves to share these principles. International contacts are entry points into that country's own network of groups. Other contacts are ones whose aims and principles are ones that we agree with fully or in part, or groups that we think may be of use or interest to people.

New additions or alterations are shown in bold.